

Title: Paper Blogs April 28, 2007

By: Sue Rockwood, inspired by (and used with permission) Leonard Low's Workshop activity for teachers

(<http://mlearning.edublogs.org/2007/03/16/workshop-activity-paper-blogs/#comment-7206>)

Concept: Creating a small, paper blogging community gives students a chance to understand "blogging" and safely practice having an "online persona."

Grade Level: Intermediate to Middle School

Objective: To help students understand the mechanics of blogging and commenting on blogs, discuss appropriate uses for blogs, and practice safe blogging and dealing with trolls.

Materials:

- ▶ Bulletin Board or posting space.
- ▶ A selection of colorful paper, Post-it notes, pens and markers.
- ▶ Stapler, tape, or push pins for posting.

Anticipatory Set: Post the word "Blog" in the middle of the posting space, with the letter B covered by a Post-it. Ask the students to tell you what definitions they know for the word "log." Responses may include "a tree chunk" "Captain's log" and "Ship's log." Guide the conversation to Ship's log, and ask/share about it being a record of the daily events on a ship. Point out that, often, it was the official record of a trip: of marriages performed by the Captain, of deaths and burials at sea, of births, and for accounting for the cargo and monies handled. Point out that entries are organized by time, but stress that a log is NOT a personal journal or diary. Tell the students they are going to have a chance to practice on the posting space what many people are doing online, and uncover the "B" from the word blog.

Teaching Sequence:

- ▶ Safety reminder. Remind students that online spaces are not private spaces, and they should follow our safety guidelines. Repeat that this is public, and not a diary (although some people have unwisely acted otherwise).
- ▶ Explain that Web-log = blog and that your paper blog space will work much like an online one.
- ▶ Ask students to raise their hands if they share your "passion" about something obscure (like knitting baby booties). Ask them if they think you'll find anyone at school that shares the same interest. Tell them that blogs are a way to use the WWW to connect to others who share a passion/interest, and that on our school "posting space" our community will share about our passions for favorite foods or beverages, since we all have them!
- ▶ Have students come to your "Blogspot"– a place where You provide them with a blog page and easy ways to customize it. Your "Blogspot" will have the selection of colorful paper and pens.
- ▶ Tell students to name their blog safely, and for this first exercise pick a favorite (not necessarily the favorite) food. Have the students describe their food or beverage, tell

something about it that makes us get hungry for it. Have students include a drawing of it, to catch our attention so we'll read their blog.

- ▶ As students finish their first "post" collect them on a central table and then give each student three Post-it notes and explain that you want them to read three other people's blogs and post "comments" by sticking Post-it notes with their reactions on to them.
- ▶ Reassure "bloggers" that, just like with online blogs, the person who owns the blog will get a chance to review and decide whether they want to keep any comments. When everyone has posted their comments, have the blog owners come get their blogs with comments and review whether they want to keep them. (This can lead to good discussions about "interesting" controversies, trolls, and whether to allow anonymous comments).
- ▶ As they are ready, staple/post the blogs with comments on the posting space. Have a selection of pens and post it notes nearby, inviting passersby to "post comments on our blogs." Remind students that they can still remove any comments they don't like, and that they can stop in and check their "blogs" during free time.
- ▶ Have other classes blog, too, and get people to comment!

Assessment: Check blogs and comments for appropriateness. After this set of blogs has been posted for a week or two, have students put up new "posts" on their blogs (you may have to clear off the old ones to make room). Let students post about any interest they would like to—and check again for appropriateness. Music, summer vacation activities, and pets were favorite second subjects.

Extensions: Consider having a "troll" make an inappropriate comment (obviously, have the student the troll attacks part of the setup, I had a middle schooler post a comment on his own blog) and leading a discussion on how to react (research recommended responses to "trolls" and cyberbullying—another whole lesson or two! Talk about controversy and comment control, whether or not to insist people sign their comments).

Variations: Have classes post comments on the blogs of students in a different class or age group.